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Abstract

An ethnographic film with supplementary written materials, this dissertation examines the lived experiences of reforestation workers in the United States and Canada. The dissertation is based on fieldwork conducted from November 2012 – February 2015, including time spent with three different reforestation crews, one comprised of Mexicans, one of Americans, and one of Canadians. It also relies on oral histories of former and company owners and other individuals who formed and grew the earliest interstate reforestation contracting companies, as well as archival research in the records of the South Eastern Forestry Contractors Alliance

My work uses liminality as a framework for understanding the lived experiences of these workers, and I have created the term “liminal labor” to describe jobs that require liminality of workers. The Canadian planters experience the job in a manner akin to a traditional rite of passage, a brief experience that defines them to their community and teaches them skills they will rely on throughout their adult life, but the American and Mexicans planters experience long-term liminality, an extended period that can last decades. For the American workers, most of whom are college educated, this liminality is their own choice. They could find other work, but they enjoy the freedom and lifestyle migrant work affords them. By contrast, for the Mexican H-2B workers, their long-term liminality is a product of necessity, not to enable a rootless lifestyle but to secure land, build houses, and support families in Mexico. The contrast of these two groups is instructive in showing how long-term liminality is neither inherently problematic nor laudable. Instead, its value is very much rooted in the subjectivity of the person living it.

This dissertation is primarily an ethnographic film, one that uses editing choices, text on screen, and narration to make an argument. The dissertation itself serves as an example of what I call “academic film,” a style of film that unites cinema’s sensorial and ethnographic potential with the theoretical and written tradition of academia.

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IN THE PINES:
A VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF AMERICAN,
MEXICAN, AND CANADIAN REFORESTATION WORKERS

Noam Osband

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Anthropology

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IN THE PINES: A VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF AMERICAN, MEXICAN, AND
CANADIAN REFORESTATION WORKERS

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Noam Akiva Osband

Dedication

To Ellen Reynolds who taught me to love filmmaking

To Lester Osband who taught me to love art

To Helen Osband who taught me to love questioning

To Michael Osband who taught me to love people

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CHAPTER 1: The Ethnographic Film

The film *In the Pines* can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/204843486/>

The password is AnthroThesis

CHAPTER 2: Footnotes to the ethnographic film

20th century forestry

The rise of forestry in the South begins in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although people had extracted resources from those forests, particularly naval stores and turpentine, large scale harvesting does not begin until the late 1800s, after timber companies had exhausted forests in the Northeast and the Lake States. By the end of the first two decades of the 20th century, Southern forests were devastated and denuded. Companies and private landholders had done minimal replanting, and there was little care for ensuring the viability of forests as a long-term source of natural resources.

Several changes in the 1920s and 1930s revolutionized Southern forestry: the discovery by Charles Herty of a commercially viable way to turn pine into paper, the growth of scientific forestry and silviculture science in the United States, and the realization by large corporations, like International Paper, that they needed to invest in reforestation in order to remain commercially viable. The first major round of reforestation occurred during the 1930s. During this time, large companies began buying up large swaths of land for replanting. There was also a great deal of reforestation done under the aegis of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Tennessee Vally Authority, both of which were planting for erosion control and flood prevention.

While World War Two slowed the rise of Southern forestry, after the war the industry boomed. Other factors played a role in leading the South to eclipse the Pacific

Northwest as the nation's leading source of wood products: a more favorable climate that shortens the growing cycle, a lack of unionization, low property taxes, and economic incentives for planting (Joshi et al. 2000). In the early 50s, around 5 billions cubic feet of wood were harvested each year. By 2001, that number had doubled. Another way to quantify the rise of Southern forestry is the fact that, over the 2nd half of the 20th century, the South saw a 5% loss of forested area, largely to urban and industrial development, yet, by the end of that same period, the standing volume of commercial timber was 80% higher than in 1953 (Carter et al 2016: xv). This is a reflection of the intensity of forestry science. This history is detailed in Clark (2004), Zobel and Sprague (1993) and Carter et. al (2016).

The rise of pine plantations has also entailed a reshaping of the Southern ecology, with wide swaths of land now converted to yellow pine, particularly loblolly pine, and the availability of labor in the second half of the 20th century, first American workers and then Latino laborers, is key to understanding this change in landscape. These planters gave landowners a reliable, mobile workforce, and they enabled industry to plant land that had been prohibitively expensive, if not impossible, to plant with machines. Sauer (1963) describes landscape as “morphology,” both shape and structure. Its shape is intrinsically tied to the structures surrounding it, or as David Harvey wrote, “Those who command space can control the politics of space” (Harvey 1989: 234). Beginning in the the early 1990s, academics have focused on the interplay of geographic scale and capitalism (Smith 1990; Herod 1997, 2001), and some have applied these ideas to other guest worker programs. Mitchell (2012) writes of the crucial role of Braceros in remaking

the landscape of California, cementing into place the capital-intensive system of agriculture that exists to this day, and the laborers discussed and depicted in the film, likewise, helped Southern forestry develop into a major industry.

More recent work seeks to contextualize humans and their impact on their environment into multi species ethnographies that don't privilege *Homo sapiens* but looks at them inextricably connected to their surrounding ecology. Tsing (2015) investigates the "assemblages" of species that come together in the act of mushroom gathering, and Burke (forthcoming) using the notion of "biogeographies" to focus on the role of industry and individuals in spreading genetically engineered trees throughout Southern forests. These works that consciously push back against the typically *Homo sapiens* focus of ethnography are particularly crucial in the modern geological era, the Anthropocene. An anthropology of the Anthropocene necessarily must situate humans more explicitly within nature, and ideas like "assemblages" and "biogeographies" try to do just that.

Scope and history of guest worker programs

The scale and scope of global labor migration has reached unprecedented numbers in recent years (Martin 2007). Changes in corporate governance, labeled "the new international division of labor" (Schaeffer and Mack 2007), has led to dramatic movements of people within and across national borders. The late 20th century was characterized by the emergence of a global economy dominated by interdependent multinational corporations who streamlined production arrangements and utilized new

management technologies (Harvey 1989; Smith 1997). These management strategies have helped fuel the new international division of labor (Schaeffer and Mack 2007). This sometimes entails corporations facilitating the movement of labor, and historical and contemporary studies from around the world document the role of employers and their intermediaries in stimulating, and at times coercing, people into motion (Basch et al. 1994; Basok, 2002; Cox, 1999; Espiritu, 2003; Rosenbloom, 2002; Tyner, 2004).

To “solve” the myriad social and economic “problems” that accompany labor migration, governments across the globe have increasingly looked to guest worker programs (Martin 2003). Since their inception in late 19th century Germany, guest worker programs have always been conceived as a way of getting people to accept job conditions that local citizens reject. In the first guest worker program, in pre-Great War Germany, police measures and state action against foreigners kept wages low and created a split labor market (Castles and Miller 2003). More recently, neoliberal economic policies around the globe have exacerbated the need for and facilitate the ability of international guest workers to fulfill labor needs in sectors with dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs (Benach et al. 2010). Moreover, for guest worker programs in liberal democracies, the path-dependent rationalities of government, employers, and workers have led to these system growing in size and lasting longer than expected (Martin and Teitlebaum 2001). This is coupled, in the specific example of Mexican guest workers, with NAFTA’s impact on rural Mexico, forcing many people unable to compete with subsidized American agriculture to look for jobs elsewhere, including the United States (Bacon 2006; Stephen 2007). Both government and private investigations show both

systemic flaws within guestworker programs aalt large (Bauer 2007; Department of Labor 2012; GAO September 2010, March 2015) and for forestry workers specifically (USDA Forest Service 2010, Wilmsen et al. 2015) Until recently federally funded legal aid programs were not permitted to represent H-2B workers—even when the workers were badly mistreated by their employers

America now brings in over 150,00o workers annually on H-2A (seasonal agricultural work) and H-2B (seasonal non-agricultural work) visas. The H-2 program was founded in 1943 when the U.S. Sugar Corporation received approval to contract Caribbean workers to cut cane, and it was expanded after the end of the Bracero program to placate agricultural growers who still sought foreign workers. As part of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, the H-2 program was split into the H-2A and H-2B programs we have today. At that time, H-2B workers lost some of the assurances and benefits accorded to the H-2A agricultural workers, such as free travel, free housing, and a guarantee of employment $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time they were in the United States. Around 5,000 workers come to America each year on H-2B visas for forestry work. Forestry is a particularly understudied sector because of its inaccessibility. This inaccessibility is the result of several factors: companies' fear of outside scrutiny, the high percentage of vulnerable workers who themselves fear the consequences of describing abuses to outsiders, and the geographic remoteness of worksites (Melton et al. 2007).

Limited rights of guest workers

Industry has historically played and continues to play an active role in pressuring the government and establishing the parameters of America's guest worker programs (Hahamovitch 2011), thereby creating distinctly different categories of personhood whose rights differ from the rights of American citizens (Anderson 2010; Calavita 2006; Honig 2001). Guest worker status serves as a marker for the increased likelihood of poverty wages, workplace exploitation, an inability to effectively organize collectively, and occupational health inequalities (Benach et al. 2007). Sub-contracting and triangular employer relationships (Cordova 1986) result in byzantine corporate structures that facilitate the exploitation of both nationals and foreign labor. Workplace and legal exploitation has long characterized the experience of 20th century American guest workers (Griffith 2006; Hahamovitch 2011; Wells 1996). "Neo-Taylorist" strategies (Crowley et al. 2010) enable owners to abjure responsibility for misdeeds and stymie attempts by precarious laborers to redress grievances (Thornley et al. 2010).

H-2 workers are a particular disempowered group; as Fausto says in the film, they are essentially tied to the employer that sponsored their visa, unable to switch employers even if they are mistreated (Bauer 2007; Elmore 2007; Griffith 2006). Coupled with the fact there is little enforcement of labor law for workers, it is no surprise workers are abused with relative impunity (Bensinger et al. 2016). Since 2005, Labor Department investigation records show, at least 800 employers have violated the rights of 23,000 H-2 guest workers including more than 16,000 instances of H-2 workers being paid less than the promised wage. The agency also said it found violations in 82% of visa cases it investigated (Garrison et al. 2015). Fewer than 15 percent of petitions for foreign workers

were scrutinized each year, and even when audits were done, many were performed months after workers had already left the jobs. But now such audits no longer take place because Congress cut their funding (Twohey et al. 2016). Additionally, companies found to have mistreated workers still manage to secure government contracts (Garrison et al. 2015).

Owing to these power imbalances, Gonzalez (2006) compares Mexican labor programs in the United States to systems of colonial labor found in French Algeria and the British West Indies, with workers in all three cases lacking basic rights like the ability to leave an employer and the right to bargain for a higher wage, as well as the risk of being blacklisted or being sent home. Mize (2014, 2016) uses the term “Bracero total institution,” a play on Goffman’s “total institution” (Goffman 1961), to describe this complete control of Bracero bodies and the resulting power imbalance that develops at the intersection of class and racial exploitation. Relatedly, exposes of the Bracero program and the H-2B program have used words like “slavery” in their titles as a reflection of these limited rights (Bauer 2007, Gonzalez 2006:6).

Determining planter minimum wage

Like many aspects of the H-2B program, the standards government requires varies over time, changing according to the outlook and priorities of the DOL and presidential administration. The companies are supposed to pay workers the highest prevailing wage, be that the federal, state or county wage for the locale where the work is taking place. However, H-2B workers do not necessarily need to earn an hourly wage. They can be

paid according to another system, such as piece rate, as long as they make at least much as they would if they were receiving an hourly salary.

In practice, however, there is often great confusion about the proper wage. In 2008, the Bush administration modified procedures for determining the prevailing wage, and litigation over these changes continued into 2016, a full 8 years after the changes were made. To set the hourly prevailing wage, the DOL conducts surveys of state and county hourly salaries for a given occupation, and employers are expected to pay the wage that prevails in the location where the work is taking place. Sometimes they use employer-generated wage surveys. Employers call these surveys a more accurate assessment of worker salaries, but worker advocates claim they constitute an obvious conflict of interest since companies have a distinct incentive to underreport hourly wages. The George W. Bush administration permitted them far more broadly than the Obama administration. Mann (2007:132) has said the wage is “politically *productive*...a crucial site of the cultural politics of capitalism, a dynamic and indeterminate (or ‘overdetermined’) forum in which the cultural and political economy of capitalism is produced,” and the consistent struggle over the prevailing wage in forestry support this assertion. The continuously changing legal landscape surrounding guest workers wages calls to mind Calavita’s (1992) work on Braceros. She focuses on the pluralism of government institutions, asserting that the Bracero program was transformed over its history by the “structural contradictions penetrating the institutions and bureaucracies of the state in different ways, posing different dilemmas, and eliciting different responses depending on the location of those institutions in the state apparatus” (Calavita 1992:4). To understand the H-2

program, in theory and implementation, we cannot view government as a monolithic block, but instead, must pay attention to the capillary powers where government becomes manifest.

On a larger level, there is an obvious contradiction in the very concept of the prevailing wage. If it is the wage at which Americans perform the work, than presumably employers should have no problem finding workers for those wages. Yet, in order to gain visas, H-2B employers must claim in writing that they cannot find people to perform that work. This same contradiction existed for the Bracero program too. The President's Commission on Migratory Labor in 1951 wrote that

whether the wage agreed upon is sufficient to attract the labor supply needed is apparently not usually considered [by growers]...When this wage quotation is set by agreement among farm employers with little or no regard to whether it is a sufficient wage to attract workers, it cannot very well serve as the price to equate the supply of and demand for labor. This is especially true when contract foreign workers are brought in at the arbitrary wage rate which then inevitably tends to set the pattern of wages in the locality. Consequently, it is useless to pretend that this 'prevailing wage' has either fairness or the precision of a wage developed by employers and workers meeting on equal footing. (President's Commission on Migratory Labor 1951).

The availability of Braceros also undermined the ability of American workers to demand higher wages. During the 1950s, growers brought in Braceros when their American workers went on strike or merely threatened to do so. For this reason, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Cesar Chavez mounted farm-worker protests over the program. It is no coincidence that the grape strike which helped form the United Farm Workers union began the year after the end of the Bracero program. More recently, in an analysis of

current programs, the Departments of Homeland Security Labor concluded that the settled upon prevailing wage “artificially lowers [wages] to a point that [they] no longer represent a market-based wage for that occupation...the net result is an adverse effect on the [U.S.] worker’s income” (Departments of Labor and Homeland Security 2015).

Low wages are not the only reason companies cannot find workers. A 2015 investigation of the H-2 program showed that “many businesses go to extraordinary lengths to skirt the law, deliberately denying jobs to American workers so they can hire foreign workers on H-2 visas instead....Even for entry-level jobs, or tasks as simple as picking melons, some employers demand that American applicants have months or sometimes even years of experience, clean drug tests, high school diplomas, familiarity with botanical nomenclature, knowledge of diabetic cooking, multiple references, or commercial driver’s permits” (Garrison et al. 2015). They sometimes also require applicants perform physical feats in interviews that aren’t requirements of the job, a test rarely required of foreign applicants, and when required to place advertisements in newspaper soliciting American job applicants, companies often place the job offer in periodicals some distance from the work.

Yet, as the film shows, it is not entirely clear they would be able to find workers even if jobs were more clearly advertised. I am skeptical companies could find thousands of American workers willing to travel around, share motel beds, and plant thousands of trees a day in a country where manual labor is not valorized either in popular culture or the paycheck. Once extremely unappealing job conditions become the norm for a

profession, it simply becomes much harder to find Americans willing to do the job. The H-2 program does not therefore just impact salaries, but it also facilitates different, more difficult workplace conditions through its reliance on desperate workers who are willing to endure more and work harder than Americans.

**Michael Burawoy, “The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor:
Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States”**

In this paper, Burawoy (1976) examines migrant labor systems in South Africa and the United States, concluding that “one consequence of a system of migrant labor is the externalization, to an alternate economy and/or state, of certain costs of labor-force renewal---costs normally borne by the employer and/or state of employment...a system of migrant labor lowers the cost of the reproduction of labor power” (Burawoy 1976:1050). This is essentially the flip side of the point Fabian makes in this scene. The implicit corollary to Fabian mentioning that the US is the beneficiary of their labor is the fact that it is Mexico that has provided the “labor-force renewal.” Hahamovitch (2011) makes this same point about guest worker programs, how they externalize the costs for the United States of raising people to a working age and the costs of health care for bodies damaged by the work long after the individuals have finished working.

Elsewhere in the piece, Burawoy writes that “wages earned by migrant workers are lower than those of domestic workers, because the former require fewer resources to sustain the renewal process than the latter” (Burawoy 1976:1082). A similar point is made by Otoniel later in this film, that the money is good for Mexicans who are using it

to support people back home but the same wages are too low for a “normal” lifestyle in a wealthier country, like the United States.

Affect and labor

Subjectivity has become a central topic of interest to anthropologists (Biehl et al. 2007). Scholarship on affective labor posits that post-Fordist economies require heightened control over workers subjectivities (Clough et al. 2007; Clough and Halley 2007; Hardt 1999; Negri and Hardt 2000; Hochschild 1983). Affect is a subset of subjectivity studies that evaluates both conscious and unconscious change in emotional responses, responses that are themselves reactions to macro-level cultural and economic forces. The shaping of individual subjectivities can lead to the growth of newly ordered collectivities, “affective economies” (Ahmed 2004), that circulate and exchange emotional models. Much of the work on affect relates it to the shift towards precarious labor associated with late capitalism. This literature highlights the growing emotional demands employers, governments, and neoliberal policies place on workers, with employees increasingly finding themselves required to mold their subjectivities and display particular affects in the workplace (Bourgois 1988; Clough et al. 2007; Han 2004; Hochschild 1983; Hardt 1999; Negri and Hardt 2000; Richard and Rudycky 2009; Thomas 2008; Walter et al. 2004). Some see affect as a potentially emancipatory phenomenon, for “affective labor” can be used to resist the automatization of subjectivity and subvert the schemes of capital (Carls 2007; Gil and Pratt 2008; Hardt 2000; Terranova 2000; Weeks 2007). The ability of reforestation workers to consciously overcome emotions and sensations like pain comes up in several different places in this

film. Gonzalo explains that role of affect quite succinctly when he says one can train themselves to ignore the pain of planting in thorns.

Liminality

“Liminality” term is first employed anthropologically by van Gennep in his canonical *Rites of Passage* (Gennep 1909). In this book, van Gennep claims a tripartite structure serves as a structure for most rituals: rites of separation, the liminal state, and rites of incorporation. Van Gennep saw his work in direct opposition to Durkheim, as “Durkheim established a framework of analysis positing ritual as a timeless consolidation of society, whereas van Gennep had proposed a more open-ended framework of analysis focusin on patterns, and positing transition as the central ‘fact of life’ “ (Thomassen 2014: 59). Van Gennep, however, was never accepted in French academia, and his ideas did not reach wide audiences until an English translation of his work in 1960. Just a few years later, Edmund Leach wrote “van Gennep’s schema has proved more useful than Durkheim’s” (Leach 1968:522)

Victor Turner introduced van Gennep’s ideas to wider audiences, both within and outside academia, bringing the phrase “rite of passage” to the popular lexicon. Van Gennep’s book inspired the essay, “Betweixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rite of Passage” in his 1967 book *The Forest of Symbols* (Turner 1967). Turner would develop these ideas further, working at times with Edith Turner, applying the idea of “liminality” to performance studies, introducing the concept of “communitas” to anthropology, and also creating the notion of “liminoid” to refer to optional, leisure time activities that have

elements of liminality in them (Turner 1974, 1982, 1986; Turner and Turner 1978).

In the 21st century, the use of the term “liminality” has grown, and scholars have applied the concept to topics such as long-term health care facilities (Daly, Armstrong, and Lowndes 2015), the experiences of breast feeding mothers (Dowling and Pontin 2016), mental health care givers (Warner and Gabe 2004), infertility clinic (Allen 2007), management consulting (Czaniawska and Mazza 2003), the stigma of chronic pain (Jackson 2005), international relations (Mälksoo 2012), and temporary employment (Garsten 1999). One paper uses the concept to look at Canadian reforestation workers (Sweeney 2009), focusing on the class and gender dimensions of that space. The spatial dimension of liminality is an important one, and, in fact, van Gennep begins his analysis of ritual passages by devoting a chapter to “territorial passage,” the geographic boundaries traversed in liminal experiences, and that geographic dimension is crucial to understanding the liminal experiences depicted in *In the Pines*. For all three groups, their physical distancing from others helps create the liminal space.

To both van Gennep and Turner, liminality is generally a *transitory* phenomena leading to a more permanent state. It is not a long-term state. While its effects are long lasting, the actual state of liminality is typically circumscribed, yet for both the American and Mexican workers in this film, their liminality is a long-term, indefinite state. In another change from its original usage, Turner celebrated liminality as liberation from modern conditions, yet in the case of the Mexican planters, liminality is a useful but oppressive state of being.

In repositioning liminality from its original usage, I am following the lead of earlier authors. Bauman (1994) proposes using the idea of a long-term liminality to describe post-Communist Eastern Europe, and Mäklsoo (2012) considers the “War on Terror” as an example of an extended liminality. More broadly, some consider liminality to be a defining element of modernity itself (Szkolczai 2000, 2017; Thomassen 2014) because of its way of dislocating the what was previously given; “the taken for granted order became shaken, even turned upside down, requiring a new solution.... Permanent liminality as borderlessness, resulting in eternal flux and complete void, is the ultimate horizon of modernity, understood as a project of unlimited destructiveness” (Szkolczai 2017: 236).” This sense of permanent dislocation and borderlessness accords with the sense of long-term liminality experienced by the guest workers in the film.

Used to represent the instability of modernity, liminality matches up in many ways with the more trendy concept of “precarity.” Social science research in the last two decades has charted the rise of “precarious labor” as a descriptor of job conditions in all sectors of developed economies around the globe since the 1980s (Bouedieu 1998; Kalleberg 2009). Precarious labor describes insecure jobs with low wages, little autonomy, and limited benefits (Kalleberg 2000 et al.; Peck and Theodore 2007), and the rise of precarious labor has played a major role in the creation of a “risk society” (Beck 1992). This change is partially reflected in the increased use of subcontracted, temp workers, including guest workers, in Europe and the United States (Quinlan et al. 2001; Martin et al. 2006; Schmid 2010). Nonstandard employment strongly increases workers'

exposure to bad job characteristics, such as wages in the lower quintile, no employer-based health insurance, and no retirement benefits (Kalleberg et al. 1999; Kalleberg 2003; Maurin and Postel-Vinay 2005). Risk is therefore shifted from employers to employees (Breen 1997; Hacker 2006; Mandel 1996), what some writers see as the key feature of precarious work (Beck 2000; Jacoby 2001). The growth of precarious labor has undercut the value of occupational health regulations in developed countries over the past few decades (Benach et al. 2010), and international studies overwhelmingly find that subcontracting leads to a deterioration of occupational health and safety (Quinlan et al. 2001). Moreover, nonstandard working arrangements typically make it difficult for contract workers to resist collectively the relatively frequent changes in the nature of their employment (Allen and Henry 1997).

While non-standard arrangements have expanded in popularity in recent decades, both within the United States (Katz and Krueger 2016) and Europe (Alderman 2017), they are not necessarily a precursor to poorer working conditions. Part-time and nonstandard arrangements can be empowering for workers. They might facilitate worker resistance against employer workplace strategies (Vallas 2006), and they offer one solution to those seeking ways of balancing family and work (Schmid 2010). Reforestation is a non-standard occupation that is enjoyed and valued by the American and Canadian workers in this film. They too have short-term contracts, little bargaining power, and few job benefits, but they proactively choose and love their jobs. Precarity doesn't describe their situation.

For this reason, I propose the term “liminal labor” to describe jobs that require its practitioners to live or work in a liminal setting. The closest antecedent to this is Purser (2012) who writes about the routines of Latino day laborers in the United States and describes it as a “labour of liminality.” However, the way I use it, liminal labor can be either ennobling or dehumanizing. The term does not necessarily indicate the subjectivity of the worker or their position within the larger labor market. Liminal labor can be something that differentiates you from others or makes you part of the larger collective. For the Mexican planters, living liminally for 8-9 months is part of a larger, socially recognizable pattern of labor migration to the United States; it makes sense to people in their home communities. Likewise, for the Canadians, planting is part of the Canadian cultural fabric (Sweeney and Holmes 2008; Sweeney 2009; Ekers and Farnan 2010). By contrast, for Americans, it differentiates them, in kind and concept, from most other American workers. For the Mexican and Canadian planters, their liminality accords with the kinds described by Turner, where the liminal state helps enshrine one’s place in the established social order. For the American planters, their liminality places them outside of what their compatriots consider the natural order. This multiplicity of experiences for the same labor conditions is something Dias (2014) finds in his research on guest workers, with some considering their experience liberating and others regarding it a burden to be endured for their families.

Low bid contracts

In a 2006 congressional hearing about reforestation (United State Senate 2006), a hearing catalyzed by an expose of the industry in the *Sacramento Bee* (Knudson and

Amezcuca 2005), Cassandra Moseley explicitly highlights bid pricing as a major factor in degrading job quality in reforestation. In the late 1990s, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management changed policies from awarding contracts that were “lowest price technically acceptable” to “best-value contracting,” a policy that requires contract grantors to consider more than price. This move that should have solved this problem, but in her interviews with contractors and workers, people felt price was still the overriding factor in best-value contracts. Moreover, many contracts she studied were bids that were over 20% below what the government estimated, something that should have been a red flag that the reforestation contractor was likely not adhering strictly to government standards. A recent survey of forestry workers also cited pricing and low-bid contracting as a driver of injurious work conditions (Wilmsen et al. 2015).

Back-to-the-Land Movement

The Back-To-The-Land movement is a term that actually describes two different yet related agrarian movements. The Back-to-the-Landers of the 1970s and 1980s mirror, in motivation and whiteness, a similar movement that took place in the late 19th century. At that time, people thought moving to rural areas would be a way to better weather financial crises, two of which occurred in 1893 and 1907, as well as to escape the din and pollution of America’s rapidly growing urban areas (Brown 2011). Much the same way *Mother Earth News* and the *Whole Earth Catalogue* played pivotal roles in the BTL movement of the 1970s and 1980s, members of this first wave relied on periodicals like *Country Life in America* to acquire the skills they did not have. This initial period received a boost during the Great Depression and is generally seen to have ended around

the time of World War Two (Jacob 1997). There was another Back-to-the-Land surge in the 1970s and 1980s, and perhaps 2,000 to 6,000 members of this movement moved to the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas between 1968 and 1982 (Philips 2016). One thing which typifies the later BTL movement is the high level of education of many of its members (Daloz 2016). They chose this life of voluntary simplicity when other, more lucrative occupational options were open to them. In that sense, there is a parallel between the people in this section of the film and the Americans who work for Piney Woods Reforestation.

Racialized History of Forestry Work

The labor force in Southern forestry has long been racially stratified. The first major Southern forestry industry was pine sap, used primarily for naval operations, and the most common form of pine sap was turpentine. The labor force was predominantly African-Americans working for low wages and in difficult conditions that resembled debt peonage (Clark 2004). Whites typically held supervisory positions (Flynt 1989). African-American workers were recruited from other states, and they often lived in camps, dependent on white operators for their livelihood. Much like pine plantations, turpentine camps were in remote locations, a setting that facilitated exploitation. (Johnson and McDaniel 2006). An amazing first hand account of a turpentine camp can be found among in the Works Progress Administration Federal Writers' Project of the 1930 which has a long interview with C.W. Wimster, a white overseer of turpentine operations (Bryan and Wimster 1939).

Bresgal v Brock and SEFCA

Bresgal v. Brock (1987) was the case that decided that forestry workers were shielded by the regulations of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act. The act provides protections for workers relating to vehicle safety, housing safety and health, disclosure of wages, hours, and other conditions of employment. The ruling accelerated the process whereby workers could no longer camp on the land, since forest owners were worried that, if they were considered joint employers, they would be required to make sure housing meets minimum standards, and a camper shell put over the flatbed of a pickup, to give just one example of a common planter living arrangement, would not qualify as acceptable housing.

SEFCA was the Southeaster Forestry Contractors Association, a trade group from the late 80s to early 2000s. It was founded by Michael Economopolous, one of the co-founders of Superior. Researching their archives showed that contractors truly struggled with getting clear answers from government regulators about how to interpret laws and requirements, and much effort was spent on trying to ascertain precisely what must be done to remain on the right side of the law. Unexpectedly, members of SEFCA submitted amicus briefs in favor of *Bresgal v. Brock*! Although it meant more onerous requirements for them, the documents and my interviews show that these larger contractors, ones already filling out paper work and therefore visible to the government, were worried about being underbid by companies operating under the radar and ignoring worker safety requirements. It was hoped that the application of MSPA to forestry work would force

greater compliance from forestry contractors and greater concern about non-compliance from the government and from large corporations who awarded reforestation contracts. However, worker abuse is still rampant in the reforestation industry (Knudson and Amezcua 2005; Melton 2007 et al.; Green 2016).

Benson, Peter,

"El Campo-Faciality and Structural Violence in Farm Labor Camps"

In this paper, Benson looks at a migrant farmworker camp in North Carolina and explicitly raises the issue of toilets. While he acknowledges that OSHA standards have good intentions and aim to protect workers, “in practice, the toilet interferes with a fleeting experience of freedom and spatializes human biological processes as properly belonging to the campo; shitting is dispossessed, brought from the woods into the john owned by the boss” (Benson 2008:619). This claim, that providing toilets is tied into the larger structural and moral violence of the labor camp, serves as an interesting pairing with Steve Myers critique here which is focused on the regulation’s impact on owners, forcing them to spend money on a service that won’t be used. In my 5 months with the Superior crew, no-one ever used the port-a-potty. Instead, it was used for storage of bags and dibble bars, the tool workers plant with. I didn’t realize this till a few weeks into my research, after I had already been using the port-a-potty.

The term “structural violence” (Galtung 1969; Farmer 2001, 2004) posits a relationship between immediate, physically harmful behavior and the long term, more direct but equally impactful forms of inequality that inscribe themselves on the body.

This concept has become a central way of framing individual suffering as the critical end point of diffuse forms of political and economic violence (Bucher 2004). Working conditions including low job control, low levels of work social supports, high job demands, effort-reward imbalances, and relational injustice have been associated with physical and psychiatric disorders (Stansfeld et al., 1997; Ferrie et al., 2006), and there is a connection between occupational health inequalities and immigration status (Ahonen et al. 2007; Biehl and Locke 2010; Benson 2008; Giordano 2008). Holmes uses “structural violence” to describe the situation of migrant strawberry pickers in Washington (Holmes 2013). Numerous investigations of forestry have shown it to be a extremely dangerous job, with high risk of traumatic and repetitive strain injuries (Knudson and Amezcua 2005, Bauer 2007, Sarathy 2012), and given the limited rights of guest workers, “structural violence” is a useful analytic for this industry. In his book on the Braceros, Mitchell also explicitly invokes the idea of structural violence as a means of understanding the experiences of these workers, writing “structural violence...is at the dialectical center of the morphology of landscape and of the relations of production and reproduction the landscape serves as the foundation for” (Mitchell 2016:132).

Dual labor market theory

Dual labor market theorists assert that economic disparities structure worker perceptions of dangerous and demeaning jobs (Bauder 2006; Bonacich 1972; Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). We do not approach a job strictly by looking at salary; instead, people view them within their social context. The theory aims to explain why many job that are dirty, dangerous, and difficult become seen as “immigrant jobs” and

how that viewpoint ends up discouraging native-citizens from working in those fields. Jack's anecdote is a great example of this phenomenon. Dual-labor market theory stands at the intersection of class and ethnicity, much like the comment Jack received from a person who clearly saw low-skill, low-wage migrant agricultural work as something white Americans don't do.

EP Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism"

The canonical 1967 article describes the impact of the Industrial Revolution on people's notions of time. Using a materialist explanation for shifts in social norms, Thompson says that the widespread use of "clock-time" is a result of factory industrialism and the temporal discipline it requires from the workforce. In this section, we can see the American planters serving as organic intellectuals, so clearly tying the traditional divisions of time into modern business practices, much the same way Thompson did.

CHAPTER 3: Themes of the Film

In theory and practice, *In the Pines* constitutes a form I call “academic film.” It doesn’t seek to replicate academia’s logarithmic approach on camera, but it also doesn’t merely rely on film’s overwhelming sensorial powers. Rather, it marries the best of both. This filmic dissertation uses the moving image, humanistic anthropology’s tool *par excellence*, to immerse the viewer in ethnography, offering guideposts and suggestions on the journey that viewers make for themselves.

On the theoretical level, the film explicitly argues that liminality typifies the lived experiences of the Mexican, American, and Canadian planters, that they are all engaged in what I describe as “liminal labor.” Yet, the lived experience and subjectivity of each group of workers is *drastically* different. The Canadian planters experience the job in a manner akin to a traditional rite of passage, one that plays a pivotal role in teaching them skills they will rely on throughout their adult life. They know the liminality is short term, and this creates ideal condition to work hard and party hard. For the Americans, their situation does not feel odd to them, unlike the Mexican and Canadian planters all of whom feel that they are living a life outside their norm. They are living a “long-term liminality,” an extended period, one that can last decades. Their liminality is defined in contrast to society. They have lives most of their fellow Americans would consider atypical, again a difference from the Canadian and Mexican workers, both of whom are following patterns of behavior completely normalized and valorized in their respective societies. For the American workers and Canadian workers, theirs is a liminality of choice. They could find other work, but they enjoy the freedom and lifestyle tree planting

offers them.

By contrast, for the Mexican H-2B workers, their long-term liminality is a product of necessity. They do not plant to support a rootless lifestyle, but instead, they are doing the exact opposite, planting to stay rooted in their home communities and secure the ability to purchase land, housing, and support their families. Almost every Mexican planter I interviewed used the word “*necesidad*” in explaining why they do this work. For Mexicans, the job takes up the majority of the year, but paradoxically, it is a liminal space. They do not think of it as a normal state or their real life. Rather, it’s a long term exceptional state which many of them stay in for years. By contrast, the American planters don’t think of it as a temporary state which they hope to escape. For many of them, it is who they are and what they do.

Other interesting contrasts exist between the two groups living in long term liminality. The Mexicans plant to support families, and the Americans to be individualists, for whom planting gets in the way of a marriage and family. Mexicans plant for specific gains: a house, land and money. For Americans, while the money is important, the larger appeal is the lifestyle, the freedom that has no price. The contrast of the American and Mexican planters shows the variety of what I call “liminal labor,” work that requires its practitioners to live in a liminal state. Liminality is neither inherently problematic nor laudable. Instead, its value is very much rooted in the specific circumstances of the person living it.

While the dissertation centers on the concept of liminality, it bears resemblance to recent research on temporality (Bear 2016), a newer school of anthropological thought that explicitly links shifts in time frameworks to capitalism (Bear 2014) and colonialism (Thomas 2016). Bear writes of “modern time” (Bear 2014:5), positing that “the economic time of the present is not radically distinct from that of the past, but is an intensification of the dominant timemaps of process and creative destruction that have always been part of capitalism” (Bear 2014:23). For the tree planters depicted in this dissertation, their work situation is surely constitutive of their conceptions of time, particularly since they are physically isolated from other people and patterns of time. Yet, while their life rhythms change, this often seems a difference of degree rather than kind. What seemed far more striking and radically destabilized to me was the shift in social roles. This was particularly true for the Mexican workers. Their exhaustive daily schedule was hard, but most of them had done agricultural work back in Oaxaca. By contrast, sharing a bed with another man, cooking and doing laundry for themselves, and remaining physically disconnected from their families for extended periods were drastic changes in their subjectivities, changes that put them completely at odds with dominant cultural patterns in their home communities.

Liminality works effectively here because the concept, in its classic form, focuses on social norms, roles, and their upheaval during the liminal period. Time plays a role in discussions of liminality, but the most important element is the shift in status both during and after a liminal period. For the people planting trees, the job is a means of achieving socially recognized status as a “normal” man in the case of the Mexicans (capable of

buying land and supporting family), a normal young adult in the case of the Canadians (capable of working long and hard hours), or, in the case of the Americans, of enshrining their status as atypical and living outside the bounds of normal American capitalism. My research aims to synthesize older work on liminality, with its focus on status, with more recent work on liminality that focuses on its temporal element. In that sense, I seek to show how a long-term liminality can be just as effective as liminal periods of a shorter duration in both supporting traditional transitions and behavior, as well as enabling people to live untraditional lives.

There is one other theme to the film, one that is dealt with in a less explicit question: why don't Americans do this work? By the end of the film, I hope to have shown that "because Americans are lazy" is analytically glib. It ignores structural changes in the industry which have changed job conditions and salaries. I do not think one can definitely say "Americans are lazy" is wrong; I do think one can say it's a response that looks solely at the individual and ignores the larger context.

While grueling manual labor doesn't appeal to everyone, the American and Canadian planting crews prove a counterpoint to all who claim native born citizens are simply too lazy to do hard work, but both those examples have one thing in common: they're both better paid than the minimum necessary wage. The fact agricultural jobs in America are done largely by low-age Latino workers isn't a reflection on the character of individuals. Rather, it is a condemnation of our society, of our refusal to recognize the value of hard manual labor.¹

¹ Of course, with film's multivocality, one could read this movie completely

Beyond dealing with these two main topics, the movie also portrays emotion more effectively than the written word. It plays on more senses and is visually striking particularly the scenes of people planting. No words could evoke the polyphony of emotions we witness when Raymundo returns home and leaves once more just a few minutes later. While those scenes are not discussed in an analytic fashion quite the same as they would in writing, they impact the viewer much more viscerally than if this was written. To analogize, the meat on the bone might not be as seasoned as a written dissertation, but the bone, while rawer, is meatier. Indeed, by dint of its ethnographic breadth and emotional heft, I believe the film will be useful to scholars, helping them form new questions and reconsider prior beliefs.

differently and come to agree with the idea that laziness explains the ethnic shift in the work force. With film, viewers are less circumscribed by the creator's intentions than in text, and they are empowered to evaluate the same material differently.

CHAPTER 4: An Argument for “Academic Film”

From the outset, “anthropology has had no lack of interest in the visual; its problems has always been what to do with it” (MacDougall 1997). Visual anthropology and filmic production is relegated to the margins of academia and anthropology, often seen as supplementary to written text (Ginsburg 1998). The fact the American Anthropological Association felt a need in 2002 to publicly state that ethnographic visuals are “appropriate media for the production and dissemination of anthropological knowledge” (Biella et al. 2002: 305) shows that, by the turn of the 21st century, the broader genre of ethnographic film was still not seen within anthropology as fully legitimate. Despite compelling and longstanding arguments to the contrary (MacDougall 1992; Nichols 1994), films are still regarded as transparent representations or 'research documents' rather than forms of knowledge production in their own right, with their primary value being classroom instruction.

However, this text-centered discipline must embrace electronic culture and “secondary orality” (Ong 1991). It should not do so simply because recent years have witnessed an explosion in the popularity and accessibility of moving images. Nor should it encourage filmic production because advances in recording technology have made it increasingly easy for individuals with limited financial backing to create quality film. Rather, anthropologists should more fully embrace film because of the epistemological and theoretical opportunities this medium offers. Some writers describe the need for a

new visual anthropology that can utilize the unique capacity of film, but they spend more time describing a need than providing a response (Ruby 2000; MacDougall 2006). This dissertation tries to meet this challenge and push the boundaries of contemporary visual anthropology through combining text and visuals in order to create a new genre: academic film.

The unwillingness to embrace visual anthropology as both art and science dates back to the founding years of this subfield, most prominently in the collaboration between Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson (Jacknis 1988; El Guindi 2004; MacDougall 2006). They traveled together to Bali in the 1930s, gathering hours of footage in the first comprehensive, large-scale ethnographic film project. They had distinctly different views about the value of film. Mead thought it should provide traditional positivist ethnographic data one could analyze in a scientific fashion upon returning from the field. She saw the camera as neutral, passive, and unobtrusive. Yet, whereas Mead was interested in capturing what happened, Bateson wanted to capture *what was relevant*, using the camera to create a different kind of knowledge. “Despite a background in natural history, Bateson was uncomfortable with an essentially empirical approach. Rather, he preferred just enough observation to supply a basis for his logical and theoretical interests (Jacknis 1988:161).” Bateson saw it more as a subjective form, one which should reflect the researcher’s interests, and for that reason he preferred handheld cinematography. In the 1970s, they sat for a joint interview where they succinctly highlighted their differences:

Bateson: I don't like cameras on tripods, just grinding. In the latter part of the schizophrenic project, we had cameras on tripods just grinding.

Mead: And you don't like that?

Bateson: Disastrous.

Mead: Why?

Bateson: Because I think the photographic record should be an art form.

Mead: Oh why? Why shouldn't you have some records that aren't art forms? Because if it's an art form, it has been altered.

Bateson: It's undoubtedly been altered. I don't think it exists unaltered.

Mead: I think it's very important, if you're going to be scientific about behavior, to give other people access to the material, as comparable as possible to the access you had. You don't, then, alter the material. There's a bunch of film makers now that are saying, 'It should be art,' and wrecking everything that we're trying to do. Why the hell should it be art?

Bateson: Well, it should be off the tripod.

Mead: So you run around.

Bateson: Yes.

Mead: And therefore you've introduced a variation into it that is unnecessary (Bateson, Mead, and Brand 1976: 37)

One can trace the history of ethnographic cinema through the prism of this debate, as anthropological films tend to either take the observational, positivistic position of Mead or the subjective, artistic style of Bateson. Until the 1970s, this positivistic approach was decidedly more accepted. One sees it reflected in the films Robert Marshall and Timothy Asch produced, films like *The Hunters* (Marshall and Gardner 1957), *The Feast* (Asch and Chagnon 1970), *The Ax-Fight* (Asch and Chagnon 1975), and *Bitter Melons* (Marshall 1971), films whose conversational and informative style made them ideal for

classroom use. While these filmmakers sometimes strayed from Mead's dictates, whether through adding audio in post-production or reearranging the chronology of events, their didactic positivism remains the driving force of the movie. They show a particular event, often analyzing it with charts and anthropological language, sometimes replaying events to show how anthropologists can determine the underlying subtexts driving the actions. This tradition was taken to its extreme in the 1960s and 1970s with Birdwhitsell's study of kinesics and Lomax's study of choreometrics, schools of thought that tried to analyze typologies of bodily movement and dance respectively, analyzing individual movements on a frame by frame basis (Lomax 2003; Prost 2003). When Karl Heider wrote *Ethnographic Film*, one of the very first scholarly texts dedicated to visual anthropology, this tradition retained enough omnipotence in the field that Heider felt comfortable claiming that a satisfactory ethnographic film reveals "whole bodies, and whole peoples, in whole acts" (Heider 1976: 75). In recent times, Heider's viewpoint has been taken up most forcefully by Jay Ruby, who believes that ethnographic film should be a "a narrative in which the anthropologist tells the story of his or her field experiences as a series of observed cultural performances that reveal some aspect of the culture studied" (Ruby 2000:266), a definition that, in highlighting observation and the performance of ritual, hearkens back to Mead's original project. He elsewhere writes that "a filmic ethnographic work must include a scientific justification for the multitude of decisions that one makes in the process of producing a film-the framing and length of each shot, selection of subject matter, technical decisions (such as choice of film stock, lens, etc.), type of field sound collected, use of studio sound, editing decisions, etc....unless a filmmaker is willing to subject these decisions to scientific scrutiny then it

is difficult, if not impossible, to justify or to think of the film in a scientific context” (Ruby 1975: 109). Marcus Banks goes as far as to say that “observational films form the jewels in the crown of the ethnographic film canon, apparently because their ethnographic qualities are most clearly seen to shine...(Banks 1992:124).”

By now, Mead’s positivistic notion of film has become deeply problematized. It is considered conventional wisdom that the “mechanical objectivity” (Galison 1999) of the camera is not neutral (Banks 1990) nor are a camera and anthropologist in a given environment ever invisible (Crapanzano 1986). More problematically, this view of anthropological cinema resists the unruly, the artistic and the sensual elements of visuality, the qualities that distinguish film as an artistic form. This multivocality is the essence of film. Much like the linguistics described in the work of Charles Pearce, film offers multiple potential meanings (Banks 1990; Wollen 1972), an argument made best by Taylor (1996). He begins by critiquing authors like Hastrup (1992) who consider film “thin description.” He argues instead that film offers a thickness language cannot. Whereas writing consists of a series of pure symbols, film is much more akin to a series of indices, a form of representation that lends itself to different interpretations. In that sense, “one might argue “that film is not more, but less bossy, one-eyed, distorting, simplifying, disarming, imposing, and so on, than text” (Taylor 1996: 72).

Ultimately, Bateson’s approach gained in popularity and became ascendant over the course of the 20th century. That said, important examples of this less scientific

tradition are found in documentary cinema's earliest years in the works of Robert Flaherty and Dziga Vertov. These two filmmakers both interfered directly with the subjects and the camera. Flaherty's most famous film, *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty 1922), is a recreation of a way of life most Inuit people had discontinued by the time he created this film. Rather than simply letting the camera record things that were actually happening, he decided to cast specific Inuit individuals as members of a fictional family, crafting a narrative and dramatic arc through asking them to act out older Inuit traditions. The film's best-known scene is the seal hunt, where a seal is killed and dragged onto the ice; by this period, however, Inuits hunted with guns. Beyond directing the subject, Flaherty met each night with actors to watch what they had filmed that day, discuss if the camera had accurately captured the traditions Flaherty sought to portray, and plan future scenes (Christopher 2005), a form of collaboration that decisively informed Jean Rouch's own reflexive films and the practice Rouch called "shared anthropology" (Rouch 2003). Vertov focused on the intervention of the camera, famously showing it being operated in his best known film made in 1929, *Man With a Camera* (Vertov 1929). Vertov's invoked the term "*kino-pravda*" (cine-truth) and the "*kine-eye*" (cine-eye) to emphasize the constructiveness of film, the fact that it invokes a different phenomenological experience than that experienced by a human eye (Vertov 1984).

Some of the most influential films relying on a more cinematic portrayal include *Chronique d'un été* (Morin and Rouch 1961), *Dead Birds* (Gardner 1964), *The Desert People* (Dunlop 1966), and *The Wedding Camels* (MacDougall and MacDougall 1976). This artistic approach is distilled to its purest form in Robert Gardner's controversial

Forest of Bliss (Gardner 1985), a film about funerary rites in Benares, India. Lacking narration, subtitles and contextualization, this 90 minute movie simply presents raw ethnographic data, edited without regard for chronology, a film that uses a camera's silent gaze for a particularly un-scientific film. It remained the source of controversy for years (Sinha 2009), with reviewers arguing that the lack of any additional commentary or guidance to help the viewer understand the film meant it should not be considered ethnographic (Moore 1988; Parry 1988). More recent uses of this technique are *Sweetgrass* (2009), *Leviathan* (2012), and *Manakamana* (2014).

Unfortunately, these films, by removing any etic insight, disabuse themselves of any of anthropology's theoretical insights. For that reason Fadwa El-Guindi distinguishes films like *Forest of Bliss* and *Sweetgrass* from those with an etic element by calling the former "ethnographic films" and the latter "visual anthropology" (El Guindi 2012 personal communication). More seriously, this negation of the etic leads some to dismiss the distinction between fact and fiction in defining ethnographic film. Rouch claimed that, "For me, as ethnographer and filmmaker, there is almost no boundary between documentary film and films of fiction (Rouch 2003:20)." Decades later, Katherine Russell, while highlighting the ethnographic value of avant-garde film, writes that "documentary filmmaking has become increasingly 'subjective,' and the great divide between subject and object, mind and matter, is potentially breaking down. In this context, ethnography is liberated from its bond with the real, and from its assumptions about truth and meaning (Russell 1999: 14)." Crawford's (1992) list of ethnographic film typologies even includes fiction film.

Such factual nihilism is the natural consequence of a tradition that eschews the theoretical tradition of anthropology², and is extremely troubling. The photographic and filmic traditions have always lent themselves to manipulation. One thinks of Stalin continuously retouching propaganda photographs to remove comrades who had been denounced in purges (David 1997), or more recently, the series of videos by James O’Keefe that led to the closing of the Association of Community Organization for Reform Now (ACORN), even though subsequent investigations revealed that the videos had been heavily doctored and that there had been no wrong-doing on the part of ACORN offices (Office of the Attorney General of California 2010).

Recognizing that past approaches have not enabled film to gain wider acceptance by anthropologists, how might one change the situation? Let us consider what makes film unique and valuable in order to consider how anthropologists might more willingly embrace it. Undoubtedly film offers us particular ways of seeing and ways of thinking that cannot be replicated in text or in person, in both literal and theoretical ways. On the literal level, the mechanical eye allows for certain types of vision that do not replicate human phenomenological experience. The close up is one example. A close up can defamiliarize the subject, as “only by means of unaccustomed and unexpected outlines produced by striking set-ups, can old, familiar, and therefore never been seen things hit

² I here distinguish theory from methodology. In creating films that lack explanation or are centered on ideas reflexivity, these films are valuable as part of anthropology’s rich methodological response to the epistemological critiques of the 1980s and 1990s. But, in terms of advancing anthropology’s explanatory models, they contribute little.

our eye with new impressions (Balazs 1970:86).” This is also true for wide shots and other types of “trickery” that can be achieved with different types of lenses. Frampton, in explaining that “film...does not phenomenologically mirror the way our consciousness audio-visually thinks,” pointedly adding that “when I am in love with someone, they do not always appear to me in soft-focus (Frampton 2006:47).” Similarly, with microphones, we can capture hushed sounds that are almost imperceptible to the human ear (Buhler 2010).

Beyond what we see and hear on screen, how we see it on the screen - editing techniques - also provide epistemological perspectives other forms cannot. Pink (2007) and Caires (2009) extoll the virtues of split screen for giving us new perspectives, and Pasqualino (2007) highlights the value of slow motion. More attention has been paid to the unique capacity of montage to bring new thinking to a topic. Marcus (1995) proposes using montage in written texts to deal with epistemological issues, yet montage is a far more effective film technique simply because the written word, unlike the visual image, is forced to adhere to certain rules of grammar to have a minimum level of comprehensibility. Balazs also writes about this quality of film. He considers linkage the “living breath” of cinema, explaining that in contrast to writing where there is structure and grammar, images are inherently irrational and therefore “a sequence of such pictures needs no connecting tissue of words (Balazs 1970:180).”

Film also offers different research techniques, forms of collaboration with subjects, and empowerment strategies. Long before logorithic anthropology began to

reckon with the problematics of subject representation and objectivation (Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fisher 1986), Rouch had called for a “shared anthropology” where filmmakers create movies *with*, not just *about*, their subjects. He writes that through such collaboration “I was able to gather more information in two weeks than I could get in three months of direct observation and interview (Rouch 2003:44).” A classic example of this technique is used in the film *Jero on Jero: A Balinese Seance Trance Observed* (Connor, Asch, and Asch 1981). Years earlier, Patty Connor, Patsy Asch, and Timothy Asch produced an ethnographic film, *A Balinese Trance Seance* (Connor, Asch, and Asch 1978), about Jero, a spirit medium in Indonesia. Three years later, Connor watched the movie alongside Jero, filming this screening of the film and asking Jero to offer a commentary on her own actions. Another filmic strategy draws on photo elicitation methods (Cannuscio et al 2009; Harper 1998; Schwartz et al. 2007; Wang and Burris 1997) by handing subjects video cameras so they can record differing, individualized itineraries of the same place (Martin 1997).

On an even more fundamental level, the filmic is quite simply ontologically different than the logirithic. As Balzas explains, “The gestures of visual man are not intended to convey concepts which can be expressed in words, but such inner experiences, such non-rational emotions which would still remain unexpressed when everything that can be told has been told (Balzas 1970:40).” Film provides closer access to interiority, giving a more intimate, indexical representation of emotion. The visual representation of emotional states more closely resemble the simultaneous nature of feelings better than words can precisely because writing works in a linear fashion that

resists simultaneity. What makes film a more immediate, accurate representation of subjectivity in contrast to words is the fact that “facial expressions are more ‘polyphonic’ than language...a face can display the most varied emotions simultaneously, like a chord...Such simultaneity cannot be expressed in words (Balzas in Carter and Livingstone 2007).” MacDougall uses the term “co-presentation” to refer to this polyphonic capacity, adding that depicting human emotions with the intimate gaze of the camera offers a “quasi-tactility” (MacDougall 2006). This gives film a different orientation to social life than anthropological monographs... a unique capacity to evoke human experience, what it feels like to actually be-in-the-world (Barbash and Taylor 1997: 74-75).” Anthropology’s turn towards subjectivity and affect as areas of study over the past two decade (Clough and Halley 2007) make this is a particularly propitious quality. Later scholars (MacDougall 1997; Barbash and Taylor 1997; Pink 2007) highlight this capacity of film to invoke the nonverbal and impart interiority. By showing the body in real time, film fulfills the promise of “the second somatic revolution” (Farnell 1999; Farnell and Williams 2008; Farnell 2011), an approach to embodiment that links praxis to Csordas’ paradigm of experience (Csordas 1994).

It is precisely because of this simultaneity that the image has a heightened degree of ambiguity, of latent meaning begging for interpretation. One can interpret a text in different ways, but the descriptions of facts, people and their environments, are fixed. We have no way to see a scene’s bare elements beyond how the author translates them to text. Film gives viewers space to perceive a scene their own way, thereby empowering viewers who can create divergent interpretations more easily than with a text. It has a

wealth of ethnographic data, a richness that cannot be circumscribed by the filmmaker's intent. It "refers to objects in a unique time and place, but these become ambiguous through their internal complexity and the different levels of potential meaning they make available simultaneously (MacDougall 2006:40)." This gives films a multivocality that shifts over time and space, depending on the audience and their own interpretive tendencies (Martinez 1990, 1992; MacDougall 1992; Vaughan 1992). This trait leads Perkins to write that film "has a built-in tendency to favour the communication of vision and experience as against programme (Perkins 1972:155)."

On the theoretical level, this ambiguity answers some of the authorial critiques post-modernism offers. This can only be done however if we rely on our subjective senses as valid generators of knowledge and push back against the Platonic tradition that still envelopes anthropology, the notion that a single reality exists which underlies all our experiences, a supposition seen most strongly in the works of Saussure and Levi-Strauss who looked for the underlying structures which framed all of language and myth respectively (Stoller 1997). It means acknowledging Frampton's simple premise that "we are aesthetic beings and aesthetic experience *is a valid mode of knowledge* (Frampton 2006:185)."

Accepting and valuing aesthetic knowledge, embracing subjectivity, means more fully valuing anthropology's humanistic element. Obviously, the sciences and humanities do not encompass wholly discrete universes. From its infancy, anthropology, more than any other academic discipline, has straddled the line between art and science,

subjective interpretation and positivist explanation (Trencher 2002). Rather than responding to this blurring of boundaries with the anxiety that commonly accompanies the breakdown of classification schemes (Douglas 2005), we should embrace the leeway this gives anthropologists to rely on a remarkable wide variety of research and analytical tools. Valuing the humanistic side of anthropology should not be seen as a post-modern attack on positivism; it is a tradition that pre-dates such discourse and hearkens back to the discipline's founding ancestors. Ruth Benedict wrote "anthropology handicaps itself in method and insight by neglecting the work of the great humanists.... Any commitment to methods which exclude either approach is self-defeating (Benedict 1948:593)." Similarly, Evans-Pritchard in his Marett Memorial Lecture of 1950 declared that "social anthropology is a kind of historiography, and therefore ultimately of philosophy or art...[it] seeks patterns and not scientific laws...[and] interprets rather than explains." (Evans-Pritchard 1962: 123).

Ultimately, the crisis of visual anthropology, its inability to penetrate the academic mainstream, stems from the unwillingness of filmmakers to embrace film as a the preeminent medium for transmitting phenomenological information *while at the same time* embracing academic theory and dialogue. *In the Pines* bring these scientific and artistic filmic traditions into dialogue with each other on screen. Firstly, the film makes explicit theoretical claims, relying on the terms "liminal labor" and "long-term liminality" to understanding the lived experiences of reforestation workers. It also contains text on screen that corresponds to the footnotes provided later in this dissertation. Some of the footnotes are academic citations, so that one viewing the film

can visual recall certain theories and concepts without having to turn away from the screen and lose the pacing of the film.

Few visual anthropology films take try to craft arguments aimed at scholarly audiences. Some use elements of this style. For example, Mead's *Trance and Dance in Bali* (Mead 1931) and *Bathing Babies in Three Cultures* (Mead 1951) are films that make distinct theoretical claims. This latter film, only ten minutes long, shows us mothers in the United States, New Guinea, and Bali all bathing their children, and extrapolating from the visual data, the film asserts that these bathing strategies are paradigmatic of the overall parenting strategies employed by mothers in these countries. The film has theoretical claims, and it even provides a bibliography in the credits for those seeking to further study the topic. One laments the lost opportunity that academics did not built off this style and merge the logorithic and the filmic in a more advanced fashion, aimed not at wide audiences but at people with a deeper understanding of anthropology. Decades later, Biemann's *Performing the Border* (Biemann 1999) looked at the Mexican-American border, offering a praxis-based approach in highlighting the constructedness of this divide. Unlike Mead's film, this film employs academic language, but also unlike Mead's film, it offers little observational data. An attempt at marrying the textual and visual in book form is Ma's (2012) which contains glossy stylized imagery from the fashion world and commentary from Ma and memers of the industry on the opposite page. It relies on a editing-heavy, stylized visual strategy. This dissertation combines the visual simplicity of Mead's approach with the theoretical heft of Biemann.

We are entering an age of new literacy. Transitions in the form and distribution of knowledge traditionally invite resistance. Yet, one need not be a technological determinist to recognize that we are transitioning to a new age. People are consuming visual media in increasing quantities, and the academy is just beginning to wrestle with the potential and the value of film. Apprehension over such a change is not new; concerns over transitions forms of knowledge are an ancient tradition. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates cautions against the transition from orality to writing, warning that writing would have a stultifying effect on intellectuals and leave them wedded to fixed ideas in contrast to the fluidity of thought required in rhetoric (Plato 1952). Similarly, the advent of the printing press in the 15th century led to fears that it would breed intellectual laziness, since no-one would have the serious engagement with a text produced in copying it by hand (Brann 1981). Fortunately, neither writing nor the printing press had a crippling effect on intellectual production. Precedent should assure us critiques of the intellectual value of film are likely similarly groundless, and my dissertation and this genre of academic film are one way of rethinking academic film in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 5: Notes on Methodology

Making a filmic dissertation, rather than a written one, impacts the research and “writing up” period in ways that were both expected and unexpected. Most obviously, it means you cannot offer your subjects the traditional form of anonymity. Even if I give someone a fake name, their face and voice is still on camera, readily identifiable to anyone who knows them. As a result, it heightens the vulnerability of the subject, and it makes it harder for the ethnographer to disappear into the background and maintain a non-disruptive presence. Another factor that complicates matters is the simple presence of the camera. I’m not just there “deep hanging out,” but I also have a camera, a monopod, a microphone, and if shooting outdoors, a big windscreen too. There is no way to hide that, and the whole time I am present with my camera, my status is readily visible.

Those challenges were expected, however. While that does that mean they were easily negotiated, I knew they would play a role in the data-gathering period of my dissertation. One element I did not quite expect: if you are making a filmic dissertation, what truly matters is what you get on film. You will take field notes of the day, writing down detailed descriptions of things you deem important and unimportant, but, ultimately, all that will matter for your film is what you capture on camera. To give one example of this, the most succinct description of how I felt about Mexican planters came the two times Raymundo, the foreman, made himself a lunch-time meal of a cheap Walmart flour taco filled with gas-station pork rinds, and before eating it, he turned to me

and exclaimed with weariness, “*Que triste es la vida,*” “What a sad life this is.” The scene’s liminality, from the flour taco to the fact Raymundo is preparing his own meals, coupled with the visual image of Raymundo eating in the dirty van with his worn-out work clothes made clear in simple, unhyperbolic terms that life is unfair and that these workers, while well-paid by rural Oaxacan standards, are earning a salary that makes many of us, myself included, morally queasy. But here’s the problem: I didn’t catch it on film. When the time came to actually create my thesis, I considered telling the story in narration, but it wasn’t the same. It was a perfect encapsulation of my feelings and research, but I couldn’t use it in my actual thesis.

How does this impact the shooting? Given the depth good ethnography requires, it requires the filmmaker to shoot a great deal more than is ideal. Because an anthropologist is never entirely sure of the story until they start writing (or editing in the case of film), I shot many more hours than I would have had I been making a less anthropological film. It meant always carrying my camera since it was never clear exactly when something important would happen. This wealth of footage makes the editing period longer. If you are going to treat your footage like field notes, that means watching all of it, and if you aren’t going to short change the editing, that means logging and making notes on all those hours of footage. I spent close to two years where my primary work was editing this dissertation film. Part of that is because of the scope of the project and the size of the film, but part of that is also cause I simply had so much footage. If I did it again, I am not sure how this would have changed my plans. Perhaps I would have focused on just one

group of planters rather than three knowing simply how much footage I would need to capture in order to have the material necessary to make an ethnographically rich film.

In addition to these general issues, each particular group had its own challenges. I only discovered months after starting research with the Mexican planters that a rumor had been spread while we were back in Oaxaca that I was a government agent, although this did not seem to impact my interactions with members of the crew. Moreover, the differences in class status couldn't have been clearer. They were toiling in one of the hardest jobs possible, and I was running around making a film. Some days the difference was particular stark: if it was raining, I wouldn't film much because I didn't want to ruin my gear. I often sat in the van studying Spanish, while the men worked in the cold and rain. How did I overcome this difference? Having a sense of humor and being self-deprecating helped. I also endeared myself by planting for a few weeks and by sharing both food and a bed with people, living the same lives they lived. Occasionally, I bought gifts of food for the workers too. I returned home for a week during my research to get my car from Boston, and upon returning, I brought back to the hotel McDonalds sundaes for everyone. The ability of food to forge bonds and trusting relationships should *never* be underestimated. My most effective strategy however was being the water boy. I thought of this my second month with Superior. I would take discarded plastic bottles, fill them with water, and walk around while they worked, giving water breaks. This might be a tip more useful for anthropologists working with manual laborers than for filmmakers, but serving as *el aquador* immediately put me on everyone's good side.

Ironically, however, the group that most mistrusted me as an agent of the government was the American planters. Some of them had criminal records, and many of them lived lives outside the bounds of propriety, with dumpster-diving and riding rails both being familiar actions, and as a result they had antipathy towards government officials. My second night with American planters, several inches of snow and ice fell, and many workers stayed in a hotel. I invited myself to crash on the floor of one room, and, needing a little alone time after a long day, I was about to walk around the Walmart Superstore nearby. I got up to leave, and immediately two guys in the room felt threatened and looked at me weird. “Where are you going?” “Why do you need to go somewhere at this hour?” I decided to stay in the room, but for most of my few months with Piney Woods Reforestation, I’d hear people joke about me being an undercover narcotics officer, the joke often masking a barely veiled hesitancy towards my presence.

With the Canadians, I almost destroyed my week of research there at the outset. I met the workers on their day off in Hearst, Ontario, and I followed them back to camp in my rental car. When meeting new groups for ethnographic research I always try to make a good impression by making myself useful. On the way back to camp, at one point, the bus of planters stopped by a lake, and many of them got out to quickly skinny-dip. One of the planters couldn’t find her phone, and I offered to drive her back later that day to look for it. It seemed a simple way to ingratiate myself to the planters. By evening time, she had gotten pretty drunk, but I didn’t want to break a promise of help. I still drove her back, and she found the music player. The last night with the Canadians, the camp bosses told me they were very suspicious of me my first full day there, as all they knew was,

toward the evening, this strange American drove off for an hour with a visibly drunk woman. I had not thought through my plan, and I did not consider how it might look to others. In hindsight, I feel very lucky, as a person and ethnographer, that I did not lose their trust right then. It was a good lesson in being hyperaware of your surroundings as an ethnographer, that even innocent actions can have negative connotations when not expected.

The research began in October 2012 when I traveled to Oaxaca, and I left Tlaxiaco with the planters to the United States that December. I stayed with Raymundo's crew for four months, and then I came back for two weeks in May so I could film them planting in Minnesota. I rejoined the crew in August in Arkansas, returning home with them, spending two months in Oaxaca, and traveling to meet different planters in their home communities. Following this, from October 2013 through February 2014, I spent most of the time in Arkansas, conducting oral histories, carrying out archival research with SEFCA, and conducting participant observation in the Superior offices. Some interviews required traveling; I interviewed the Southern Poverty Law Center's lawyer Jim Knoepp in Atlanta, and I interviewed Jerry Eller the day following in rural Georgia. I also traveled to Mexico that December of 2013 to travel once more with the men from Tlaxiaco to Monterrey for their visas and from there to Superior's offices in Arkansas. In February 2014, I spent my first month with Piney Woods Reforestation. That summer of 2014, I spent a week with Thunderhouse Forest Services in northern Ontario, and in winter 2015, I spent two more months with Piney Woods Reforestation. This comprised the bulk of my research experience. I also did a few trips back to Arkansas and one to

Mexico during the editing of the film to conduct follow up interviews and gather several more oral histories.

Upon returning home, I watched and logged all the footage. Although ideas of liminality had crossed my mind and my field notes earlier, it was during this early part of the editing that I decided to create this particular film I edited. My process for actually making the film was long, exhaustive, but I think effective. I would highlight the bits of film I thought were particularly great, and then I grouped these selects by category. I then watched each category, winnowing it down some more, completing this process five or six times, before having the foundational scenes and shots for my film. I don't think this is the quickest way of doing the film, but if time is not paramount, I find this method *very* effective for pulling out the best material. I rarely if ever want the same scene or point made twice, and this style of editing places a premium on comparing similar shots.

I remain grateful for the permission to complete a filmic dissertation, and in watching and re-watching this film, I remain strong in my conviction that the visual was absolutely necessary to capturing the emotional and physical toll of this particular job. The impediments and difficulties of a filmic dissertation should not be seen of as unnecessary and unfortunate byproducts. That's simply what it means to place film paramount as a mode of academic production, and I am happy to have hastened the process whereby other Penn anthropology students will have the opportunity to engage in similarly difficult and rewarding endeavors.

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